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Signs of Child Abuse

1. Changes in behavior. Abuse can lead to many changes in behavior. Abused children often appear scared, anxious, depressed, withdrawn or more aggressive.

2. Returning to earlier behaviors. Abused children may display behaviors shown at earlier ages, such as thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, fear of the dark or fear of strangers. For some children, even loss of acquired language or memory problems may be an issue.

3. Fear of going home. Abused children may express apprehension or anxiety about leaving school or about going places with the person who is abusing them or exhibit an unusual fear of a familiar person or place.

4. Changes in eating. The stress, fear and anxiety caused by abuse can lead to changes in a child's eating behaviors, which may result in weight gain or weight loss.

5. Changes in sleeping. Abused children may have frequent nightmares or have difficulty falling asleep and as a result may appear tired or fatigued.

6. Changes in school performance and attendance. Abused children may have difficulty concentrating in school or have excessive absences, sometimes due to adults trying to hide the child's injuries from authorities.

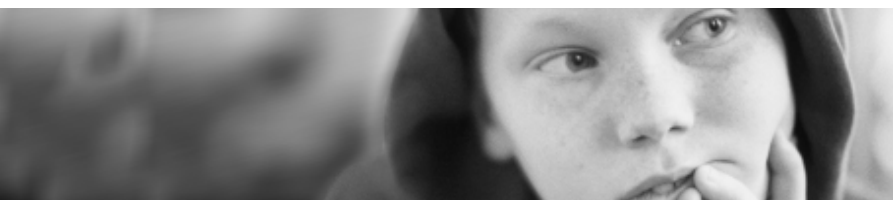
7. Lack of personal care or hygiene. Abused and neglected children may appear uncared for. They may present as consistently dirty and have severe body odor, or they may lack sufficient clothing for the weather.

8. Risk-taking behaviors. Young people who are being abused may engage in high-risk activities such as using drugs or alcohol or carrying a weapon.

9. Inappropriate sexual behaviors. Children who have been sexually abused may exhibit overly sexualized behavior or use explicit sexual language and may exhibit symptoms of a genital infection.

10. Unexplained injuries. Children who have been physically abused may exhibit unexplained burns or bruises in the shape of objects. You may also hear unconvincing explanations of a child's injuries.

Be aware that some children may show ALL or NONE of the signs above. Trust your instincts. Suspicion of abuse is enough of a reason to take action.





Do

- Allow the child to use his/her own words to describe the incident
- Assure the child they are not to blame for what happened
- Treat the child normally
- Take care of the child's emotional needs
- Listen and take notes
- Allow the child to talk about the incident if they bring it up
- Write down concerns and questions for CPS, police officers and therapists
- Love and support the child

Don't

- Use your language to help the child describe what happened
- Try to interview or investigate
- Overreact
- Express fear, anger or anxiety
- Initiate conversation about the incident
- Let personal feelings influence the child
- Reward child for giving information

Stop the Hurt. Heal the Child.

You too can help break the cycle of sexual abuse and bring hope and healing to a child.

To refer a child,

To become a volunteer,

To inquire about the services provided at The Children's Assessment Center or

To make a donation, please call 713.986.3300

or email us at info@cac.hctx.net.

To report a case of child abuse or neglect in Texas, please call 1.800.252.5400 or contact your local law enforcement agency.



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